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ABSTRACT

This study of creative genius argues that creativity can best be understood as a Darwinian process of variation and selection. The artist or scientist generates a wealth of ideas, and then subjects these ideas to aesthetic or scientific judgment, selecting only those that have the best chance to survive and reproduce. The book draws on the latest research into creativity and explores such topics as the personality type of genius; whether genius is genetic or produced by environment and education; the links between genius and mental illness; the high incidence of childhood trauma, especially loss of a parent, among Nobel Prize winners; and the importance of unconscious incubation in creative problem-solving. Individual chapters address the following topics: (1) genius and Darwin--the surprising connections; (2) cognition and the creative process; (3) the role of variation and the possibilities of both brilliance and madness; (4) development (the nature-nurture controversy); (5) products as evidence of creative genius; (6) groups (the role of culture in the development of creative genius); and (7) the future of the idea of Darwinian genius. (Contains approximately 650 references.) (DB)

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